

MEETING SUMMARY

WESTERN OREGON STATE FORESTS HCP SCOPING TEAM

Tuesday, March 3, 2020, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Oregon Department of Forestry, 2600 State St, Salem, OR

ATTENDEES

Participants: Jim Muck (NOAA Fisheries), Julie Firman (ODFW), Nick Palazzotto (ODF), Randy Smith (ODF), Brian Pew (ODF), Ryan Singleton (DSL), Josh Seeds (DEQ)

Technical Consultant and Guests: Troy Rahmig (ICF), Mike Wilson (ODF)

Facilitation Team: Cindy Kolomechuk (ODF), Deb Nudelman (Kearns & West), Sylvia Ciborowski (Kearns & West)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Deb Nudelman (Kearns & West) welcomed members. Meeting participants introduced themselves.

Deb reviewed the agenda, which includes: 1) Agency Updates and Stakeholder Engagement Updates, 2) Review Updated Riparian Management Area (RMAs), 3) Discussion on Temperature, 4) Discuss Management Activities in RMAs, 5) RMA Variances and Alternate Management Plans, 6) Review Road and Stream Data, 7) Discuss Restoration Priorities and Process, 8) Update on Wood Modeling, 9) Discuss Torrent Salamanders, 10) Confirm topics for Steering Committee update, and 11) Approach going forward, next steps, and summary.

AGENCY UPDATES

Members provided the following updates relevant to the Western Oregon State Forests HCP process:

Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF): The Oregon Governor's Office announced a memorandum of understanding (MOU) developed in collaboration with conservation and industry stakeholders that proposes an HCP on private forest lands in Oregon.

NOAA Fisheries: Reported back from a training on promoting collaboration among agencies.

REPORT OUT ON STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Deb announced that a meeting open to the public is set for March 30 at ODF in Salem (Tillamook Room). Scoping Team (ST) members are encouraged to attend in person as possible. The meeting will focus on the forest goals and objectives, provide an introduction to species modeling and timber harvest modeling, and include a conceptual discussion on riparian management areas.

REVIEW UPDATED RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT AREAS (RMAs)

Troy Rahmig (ICF) noted that the goal of today's meeting will be to discuss Riparian Management Areas and review an updated approach that has been revised based on ST input at the last meeting.

Troy reviewed key changes to the RMAs approach, which include:

- Clarified the buffer for the temperature protection zone.
- Change to the ground-based equipment restriction around seasonal non-fish bearing streams. The Washington approach was considered in developing this restriction.
- Clarified the distinction between a confluence versus a natural stream transition.
- Provided various examples that demonstrate the difference between horizontal distance and slope distance.

Discussion:

Members discussed and made the following comments and questions:

- Will it be complicated for ODF operations staff to lay out buffers on the ground, if buffers vary based on the different stream types and confluences?
 - ODF responded that typically timber sales occur on discrete stream segments and would not usually include many stream types and stream confluences, so would not require a complex buffering scheme. Operations staff is accustomed to applying different buffer widths to different kinds of streams.
- Consider how to explain the RMAs and various buffer widths this in a simpler way to the public; the various buffer proposals for different stream types can be complicated. It will also be important to explain the differences between horizontal distance and slope distance and clarify the implications of using one versus the other.
- Clarification that for the proposed equipment restrictions, there would be a rounded buffer around the head of the stream. It is also anticipated that the HCP would include management direction for the equipment restriction zones, to ensure soil protection since there may be limited tree canopy.

- Suggest that perennial Type N streams have sufficient buffer to keep stream temperature cool within the temperature zone. It is likely sufficient to have smaller buffers for seasonal Type F streams. It will also be important to consider the cumulative effects of multiple clear cuts along a stream; recovery is slower if clear cuts are closer together.

ICF clarified that TerrainWorks is developing the stream layer and buffer, and that will be available to the ST soon to help the group further discuss appropriate buffer widths.

- It may also be useful to talk to experts in Washington to get their understanding of ideal buffer widths and suggest doing so prior to the March Steering Committee meeting.
- Discussed the appropriate buffer for sediment protection in the equipment restriction zone.

STREAM TEMPERATURE

Julie Firman (ODFW) provided an update to her previous presentation that reviewed literature focused on stream temperature.

- Presented information around heating related to buffer width.
- Presented research on mean stream temperature response associated with no-cut riparian buffers with adjacent clear-cut harvest.
- Presented results from models predicting distance from harvest and change in temperature for various scenarios of width, depth, and gradient.

Discussion

Members discussed and made the following comments and questions:

- Clarification around how to implement the results from the RipStream study. The key conclusion from the study was that slower flowing stream reaches have more ability to recover in a shorter distance than do faster flowing streams.
- Discussed the importance of considering cumulative effects of multiple clear cuts along a stream. Cumulative effects are not very significant when there is at least one mile between clear cuts.

Cumulative effects: If all heat is not lost in one harvest reach before stream water reaches the next reach, then that affects the next reach of the stream. ODF uses 0.3 degrees in temperature change as the target for all sources cumulatively. The DEQ approach to dealing with cumulative effects is to try to minimize heat loading at the individual harvest unit level.

- For DEQ, the most important aspects in implementation are shade, aspect, and stream width.
- Discussed the relationship between an HCP and trying to achieve Not Likely to Adversely Affect (NLAA). Under an HCP, there can be an effect but there must be mitigation against that effect. It may be appropriate to rely heavily on a monitoring program and use adaptive management to respond to identified effects.
- Discussed the differences between slope and horizontal distances to measure buffer widths. This HCP uses horizontal distance rather than slope distances.
- Discussed common practices in Washington. The Washington Department of Natural Resources does not tend to apply varied buffers in different forest types or geographies. Instead, the DNR is most interested in making things implementable and tends to focus on average cases. The DNR does make distinctions based on site potential.
- Julie noted that she would send out the updated slides to Scoping Team members.
- Josh Seeds (DEQ) suggested also looking at a Cole and Newton paper on cumulative temperature impacts. Josh will email it to Julie and full ST.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES WITHIN RMAS, RMA VARIANCES, AND ALTERNATE MANAGEMENT PLANS

Troy provided an introduction and noted that the purpose of today's conversation is to discuss potential management activities that could occur inside of RMAs, and to discuss alternative management plans and why and how they are used.

Mike Wilson and Randy Smith (ODF) presented:

- Proposed definition of "mature forest conditions": stand dominated by large conifers, or where hardwood-dominated conditions are expected to be the natural plant community, a mature hardwood/shrub community.
- Clarified the ODF proposal for management within RMAs, based on ST input:
 - The purpose of any management activities allowed within RMAs would be to achieve mature forest conditions. There would be no commercial objective.
 - Reviewed proposed thinning prescriptions.
 - Reviewed proposed protocols for what to do with felled trees.
 - Equipment restriction zone still applies.
 - Reviewed proposal for corridors. Corridors would have full suspension whenever possible, and there would be actions made to minimize widths of corridors.

- Provided examples of variances where standard buffer targets may not be achieved.

Discussion on Management Activities Within RMAs

Members discussed and made the following comments and questions:

- Clarified that under the proposal for corridors, it would be permissible to yard out some smaller trees felled in corridors for a variety of reasons (safety, fuel loading concerns, operations).
- Clarified that management activities within RMAs are considered mitigation. It is unlikely that ODF would do these management actions as a stand-alone activity; instead, they would occur when there is harvesting done in the land adjacent to the RMA. During that harvesting, ODF may require that the adjacent harvester take the opportunity to go into the adjacent area to accelerate mature forest conditions by applying these management considerations in the RMA.
- Clarification that ODF does not currently spray herbicides in riparian areas and does not propose doing so under the HCP.
- Suggestion on spacing of corridors.
- Discussion on NOAA Fisheries considerations for thinning in riparian reserves, and number of trees per acre desired before thinning can occur. NOAA Fisheries tends not to thin for restoration or mitigation purposes and has size limitations for when to remove trees for fire protection reasons. The agency also does not support thinning in moist forests, because most riparian areas in moist forests do not burn very hot, so it is important to leave those trees intact to support getting wood into streams.

Jim Muck (NOAA Fisheries) noted that he would distribute a Pollocks paper on thinning and the importance of allowing stems to fall and provide woody debris, and reviews thinning in moist forest riparian reserves.

- Members supported the ODF proposed definition of “mature forest conditions.”
- Discussion on whether fuels reduction should be part of the riparian management strategy. If some felled trees are left on the ground, that inherently leads to increases in surface fuels and increases fire risk.

Discussion on RMA Variances and Alternate Management Plans

Troy explained that Alternative Management Plans are what ODF uses to codify what is happening in RMAs. During HCP implementation, ODF would produce annual reports that demonstrate how riparian buffers were implemented across the landscape and would include an accounting of the Alternative Management Plans. ODF would develop the Alternative Management Plans internally within the agency, and it is not anticipated that ODF would enter into collaborative processes to develop each Alternative Management Plan.

Members discussed and made the following comments and questions:

- Members noted that it seems reasonable for ODF to develop Alternative Management Plans for routine situations internally (for example, when a road intersects a riparian area). There may be some value in putting a multi-agency team together for new and novel approaches (for example, systemic changes like alder conversions).

Troy noted that the ICF-ODF team will further consider today's input and bring a proposal on Alternative Management Plans to the ST for a future meeting.

ROAD AND STREAM DATA

Troy noted that the ODF-ICF team has been working to update and pull together road and stream data. Today, the team will present a proposal for how to present the road and stream data in the HCP and seeks input on whether this approach makes sense.

Troy provided the following updates on road and stream data:

- We now have a road layer that can be overlaid on distribution of species data, to understand where roads intersect with species populations.
- We have begun to quantify where streams and roads are within the buffers, and how many times roads cross streams.
- Showed an example table that quantifies road miles in relation to Oregon coast coho distribution. The table shows miles of ODF roads close to streams and within the riparian management area around streams.
- The HCP document will discuss road management and its effects on covered species. The roads tables will be helpful to understand relative effect on species. The HCP will look at the population level for species and incorporate the roads data.
- Showed a sample map detailing where existing roads are within the watershed, with coho distribution overlay, and stream crossings indicated.

Discussion

Members discussed and made the following comments and questions:

- It will be important to know how many roads are hydrologically disconnected, and how many are ridge-line roads. Ridge line roads have less impact on the species. There are specific best management practices (BMPs) for hydrologically disconnected roads. Suggest that the HCP outline BMPs that show how the agency will promote hydrologically disconnect roads
- Discussed mitigation tools. Decommissioning roads is a good mitigation strategy and should be tracked. Other BMPs can also be used as mitigation tools.

- Suggest developing management directions for construction of new roads. The directions should indicate that whenever possible, should avoid building new roads in RMAs, in order to minimize roads in riparian reserves.
- Suggest developing BMPs to minimize the amount of sediment that comes off roads and into streams.
- Suggest that the HCP note the difference between summer and winter hauling. In summer, it is appropriate to use native and natural roads for hauling. In winter, hauling should be limited hard roads to minimize sediment getting into streams and should pause hauling movement if the roads are getting wet.
- Troy: We have information on when roads have been last serviced, and time of when passage for stream crossings was addressed.
- Members generally agreed with the proposed approach to quantifying roads. Suggest that the table also differentiate between riparian crossings and miles of roads. Suggest including example maps and tables in the HCP document (not just in the appendix).

Troy explained that the next steps are to do some additional work to gather BMPs and management direction related to roads and have future ST discussion on that.

RESTORATION PRIORITIES AND PROCESS

Troy gave a brief framing presentation on restoration opportunities in the HCP:

- Restoration includes many types of restoration projects: instream complexity, floodplain reconnection, passage improvement, and others.
- It is not anticipated that the HCP would define specific restoration projects to be implemented on landscape. Instead, the HCP will explain the limiting factors for the populations, explain the biological objectives and how much of that is accomplished with the conservation strategy, and lay out the opportunities for restoration efforts to accomplish the biological objectives fully.
- The HCP will likely include a monetary commitment for some specific amount of restoration to occur. For example, there may be a restoration fund developed, and funding would be allocated to restoration projects on an annual basis depending on amount of revenue generated.
- The team suggests developing a process to prioritize where restoration should occur. The HCP should state the prioritization process and criteria, so that as implementation occurs, the right projects can be funded at the right time. It is anticipated that restoration would include partnership between ODF, watershed councils, and other groups.

Discussion

Members discussed and made the following comments and questions:

- Suggest that the restoration projects prioritization process incorporate key watersheds and IP reaches.
- Suggest including beaver enhancement projects in the list of types of restoration projects.
- Question about how ODF balance contribution to the different types of restoration projects, and how the agency might prioritize the various types of projects. The ICF team noted that the HCP can be very prescriptive or less prescriptive. Passage improvement and large wood placement projects tend to be opportunistic so they might be treated differently. Larger floodplain connection projects might rely on accumulation of funds from several years and grant matches. If there is a desire to be prescriptive in the HCP, need to be careful about not removing flexibility to fund projects when the best opportunities arise.

A member noted that ODF has tended to focus on instream complexity projects in the past because they are easier to implement. However, it will be important to focus on floodplain reconnection in the future. Suggest looking into the two-dimensional hydrologic models that Bryan Clure developed that are informative about how floodplains currently function and may help with prioritizing floodplain reconnection projects.

Another member noted that it would be useful to have a project lead to focus on major floodplains that are prioritized for floodplain reconnection and find partners to contribute to reconnecting those floodplains. It will be important to have a champion to move the efforts forward.

- Suggest setting a goal for fish passage, since there is likely data available on the number of culverts that are due for upgrades over the next 30 years.
- ODF noted that it will be important for the HCP to clarify that the agency is committed to restoration on annual basis, and that collaboration with partners is critical, as is flexibility to fund projects that have the best value and benefit for the species. Hard targets for different restoration goals might not be appropriate, as they could limit the agency to funding projects that might not provide the best benefit in the future.
- Suggest looking into best practices and creative ways to set up a programmatic approach. For example, could consider targeting a future desired outcome, outlining biological markers or milestones, and prioritizing projects that help meet those characteristics or goals. It would also be useful to engage with stakeholders to build that approach and seek their visions for the landscape for the next fifty years.

WOOD MODELING UPDATE

Troy explained that TerrainWorks is working to update the wood modeling and should have this complete within the next two months. The ST will likely have an opportunity to review interim work products, including a refined stream layer and understanding of what buffers look like on the landscape. The model will allow us to see how much wood the conservation strategy is likely to achieve and can provide more details on temperature risk areas.

The timber harvest model will include a prediction of harvest by decade and show data for both thinning acres and clear-cut acres.

TORRENT SALAMANDERS

Members decided to discuss this topic at a later meeting.

CONFIRM TOPICS FOR STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

The next Steering Committee (SC) meeting is scheduled for March 31, 2020. Each ST member is encouraged to talk to their SC representative prior to March 31 to check in on what has been discussed by the ST.

Troy provided an update on topics that would be presented to and discussed with SC:

- Terrestrial strategy: will present and discuss the concept of Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs) and how it would be applied.
- Riparian strategy: will present the riparian strategy and buffer strategy that has been discussed by the ST. May also review some of the literature findings on temperature recovery and wood.

APPROACH GOING FORWARD, NEXT STEPS AND SUMMARY

Deb thanked members for their participation.

The next ST meetings are scheduled for:

- Wednesday, March 18, 10:00am – 2:00pm (terrestrial focused – at USFWS, Portland)
- Tuesday, April 7, 10:00am – 2:00pm (aquatic focused – at ODF, Salem)

The next SC meeting is scheduled for March 31.

The next meeting open to the public is scheduled for March 30, 1:00pm – 4:00pm in Salem.

ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were identified throughout the meeting:

- Julie Firman – Share updated stream temperature slide presentation with ST.
- Josh Seeds – Share Cole and Newton paper with Julie and ST.
- Jim Muck – Distribute Pollocks paper on thinning and woody debris with ST.